



## **WILD TURKEY RELEASE SITE CRITERIA**



This agency receives many requests from landowners and sportsmen to stock wild turkeys in their respective areas. It has been an agency policy for many years for these requests to be evaluated by a district biologist or the wild turkey study leader prior to being approved as an acceptable wild turkey release site. Criteria that are used in the evaluation are discussed below.

1. **Presence or absence of wild turkeys** - The existence of turkeys on or near the request site usually indicate that there is no need for restocking.
2. **Distance from presently occupied turkey range to request area** - If the request area is connected with occupied turkey range by good habitat, it may be only a matter of time before the area is stocked by the expanding population. Request sites within 10 miles of occupied range should be given low priority are not approved as release sites. If there are barriers between occupied range and the requested area, these should be noted and described. Barriers may be things like large agricultural tracts, population centers, and area lacking access control and protection.
3. **Acreage of unoccupied habitat** - The acreage needed to support a population of turkey is highly variable and depends upon many factors. Here the biologist evaluating the request site must use his experience and knowledge to determine if the site is large enough to warrant stocking. A minimum of 4,000 acres of good quality habitat is a good rule of thumb.
4. **Protection** - Protection during the restoration period is critical and must be addressed prior to the request being put on the approved release site list and stocked with turkeys. This protection must come from the local people in and around the release site. In addition to local support and protection, the season will be closed for a period of five years after the initial release.
5. **Land use trends** - Land use patterns and trends on and around the request site should be evaluated. Large scale land clearing, forestry practices, and urbanization are some factors that should be considered.
6. **Spreading potential** - Potential for spreading beyond the release site is considered.
7. **Trapping Agreement** - A 10-year trapping agreement must be signed between the department and the major landowner in the restoration area that allows the Department to trap and remove turkeys once a population becomes established for restocking other areas.
8. **Other considerations** - The request area and adjoining areas should be evaluated to determine any past releases of pen-raised and domestic turkeys. Existence of potential disease situations from poultry operations should be noted. The history of past wild turkey releases for the immediate area should be documented.